



ASLEF

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JOURNAL
SEPTEMBER 2012



Stop
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Around
The Clock!

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Virgin - hello groupies

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important as safety

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Railway finances: March hare territory

PEOPLE think I'm exaggerating when I talk about the 'lunacy' of how the railway is financed. But I'm not. I am reporting facts. I was leafing through Stagecoach's accounts the other day when I noticed this sentence: 'South West Trains, which makes premium payments to the DfT, continues to receive revenue support.' So SWT gives money to the Treasury as payment for running the franchise. And then the Treasury gives money to SWT because the company hasn't made enough profit. In fact, as a group, last year Stagecoach gave the Treasury, as 'franchise premia', a total of £407.5 million. And then the Treasury gave them £124.4 million in rail revenue support. It looks more like a late-night poker game than a national financing arrangement.

And rail freight financing is by no means outdone in the lunacy stakes. The rail regulator ORR is proposing 'fair' new charges to ensure that rail freight covers all the costs that would have been avoided if these trains had not used the infrastructure. This sounds reasonable – until you consider that road haulage does nothing of the sort.

Rail freight has seven separate charges while road haulage only pays two – road tax and fuel duty. Rail freight pays on the basis of distance travelled, a concept constantly rejected for road. Heavy Goods Vehicles pay between one to two thirds of the costs they impose on society in terms of damage to roads. This is ignored on the motorway, but not on the track.

So the rail regulator's way of making something 'fair' is to disadvantage rail. This is remarkable, given that he is supposed to be on our side. One of the ORR's principle roles is 'helping the mainline railway meet the long-term challenges'. The Department for Transport confirmed this year that this includes 'to continue to support the growth of freight services'.

So the ORR wants to ensure rail freight's success by proposing crippling charges that hand the advantage to road haulage.

So perhaps I'm wrong. Maybe 'lunacy' understates the case.

Mick Whelan, General Secretary



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**More than
just a union**

Union joins protest on fare rises and service cuts

ASLEF members across the country joined last month's protests about fare rises and job and service cuts with the other rail unions, transport campaigners and rail passenger groups. General Secretary Mick Whelan said, 'Rail workers and the travelling public are united in this campaign. Commuters, environmentalists, businessmen, holidaymakers – even motorists! – all have a vested interest in an affordable, accessible and reliable rail service.'

The Government is allowing train firms to raise fares from January by 3% more than the inflation rate of 3.2% which was published on the day of the



Some protestors dressed as Bullingdon Club members to get over the message that rail will soon be priced so that only toffs can use the service

protests.

As the 3% figure is an average for regulated fares, some could jump by 11.2% according to some commentators, meaning tens of thousands of Home Counties commuters could be paying over £100 a week to get to work in the New Year. Most rush-hour travel, season tickets and off-peak fares



Waterloo Station was the focus of the protests in London

will rise by well above the rate of inflation.

Meanwhile government cost-cutting proposals resulting from the McNulty Report could mean losing up to 20,000 jobs, mainly affecting station staff, guards, catering and ticket offices.

Protestors argued that the only way to prevent this 'untenable'



National Organiser Simon Weller and EC member Marz Colombini join the demonstration

position is to cut out the huge extra costs due to privatisation, and return the service to public ownership. Research carried out by Transport for Quality of Life shows that eliminating the costs of privatisation through integrating rail under public ownership could equate to an across the board fare reduction of 18%.

50 years on: time to reverse Beeching's butchery

NEXT year will be the 50th anniversary of the Beeching Report, which led to the closure of many rail lines. 50 years on, the case for new or reopened connections is increasingly strong, with demand for rail now at its highest level since before the Second World War.

For much of the second half of the last century, the railways were seen as a static or declining form of transport, superseded by road and air travel as the railways themselves had superseded the canals. This has not been the case. Growth has continued through the recession (in freight as well as passenger travel) and there is now overcrowding on many lines, even on local services in rural areas. This growth is leading to and justifying continued investment in rail lines and services.

Despite the growing case for new and reopened connections, there is no clear process in the rail industry for this to happen. Some new lines and stations have been built however, and demand on these new lines and stations has usually been higher than forecast. A report by the Association of Train Operating Companies suggests that of the reopenings since 1995, all have exceeded forecasts, some by significant amounts.

New or reopened railway lines and stations have many benefits. They create jobs, support local economic development by improving access and enlarging labour markets, support

new housing or business developments or access to public services, help tackle traffic problems and reduce carbon emissions by providing good alternatives to car use.

However, there are a number of obstacles in pursuing reopenings, notably lack of expertise and any clear process within the rail industry for assessing, pursuing and sponsoring reopening projects. Financing is also an issue.

The Government announced a £20 million fund for reopening stations as part of its High Level Output Specification for the next control period, but we would like to see this extended to line reopenings as well. We would also like to see a specialist unit led by Network Rail to co-ordinate work on reopenings and help with business cases, Transport and Works Orders and operational issues. Finally, alignments for possible reopenings need to be safeguarded in the planning system.

The case for reopenings or new connections is not based on nostalgia for some imagined golden age of rail, but on providing congestion free, low carbon transport choices. We recently published our



Swansea station was officially opened by Welsh Government Transport Minister Carl Sargeant, after undergoing a £7.6m facelift

report, Railway Reopenings - the case for growing the rail network and how it can be achieved [<http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/files/reopening-railways-report.pdf>], which sets out our recommendations and we hope that the Government, local authorities and the rail industry will respond positively.

● **Stephen Joseph of the Campaign for Better transport**

ANTI-HS2 GRANTED JUDICIAL REVIEW: Opponents to HS2 have been granted the right to seek a judicial review against the government's plans for the High Speed Rail Network. The High Court will hear their case from December 3 in a hearing that is likely to take up to 8 days. It is not expected that the project will be delayed by the move.

Pat on the back for ASLEF as Tube records are broken

Mick Whelan last month congratulated all London Underground workers for the pivotal part they played in transporting massive amounts of Londoners and visitors to the Olympics.

'The record number of people carried by London Underground was broken three days running in a single week - and our members were key to that,' Mick says. 'I am congratulating them because no one else has done so. The silence of politicians and the media at this good news is a marked contrast from the previous week when there was a possibility of industrial action. Everyone had

something to say then!'

On the first Wednesday of the Games, 4.25 million people used London Underground. On Thursday that rose to 4.31 million and on Friday the number of Underground passengers rose to 4.4 million.

'We drove more than half a million passengers more each day during the Olympics,' Mick says. 'Perhaps the regular moaners can reflect

on that before they start complaining about ASLEF members in the future.'

And the Gold medal for 'the Tube's happiest passenger' probably goes to Ruben Limardo, the Venezuelan fencer who put in the performance of his life, picked up a Gold medal - and then hopped on to the Tube to get back to his hotel! Here's a couple of pictures of a very happy man!



NW conference action plan for rail

ASLEF members played a prominent role at a recent North West TUC conference in support of the Action for Rail campaign which seeks to protect the industry from government spending cuts and limit the impact of the McNulty report.

After hearing from ASLEF's Colin Smith and the RMT's Bob Crow, the 70 trade unionists, campaigners and activists at the Mechanics Institute in Manchester discussed how to raise awareness of the campaign across the north west. They proposed concentrating on safety, fares and tax:

- Safety - driver-only trains, unstaffed stations and overcrowding raise issues of personal passenger safety; cost cutting would also compromise maintenance
- Higher fares hit passengers directly but also lead to higher prices of goods transported by rail; they would drive more passengers and freight onto our roads, adding to congestion and green-house gas emissions.
- It is a bad deal for the tax payer - public money went in, while profits went out as dividends to share-holders - often foreign nationalised rail companies! - while services decline.



Newsinbrief

○ BRUM BACKING FOR HS2

A survey carried out by Birmingham City Council has revealed that more than 60% of residents living within half a mile of the proposed HS2 route support proposals to bring HS2 to Birmingham.

○ HISTORY SOCIETY PUBLISHES KEN ISSIT BOOK



The History Society has published a book written by Ken Issit, a locomotive fireman on LNER from 1947 to 1960. Ken says the richly-illustrated book 'contains primary evidence of what a footplateman did as part of his job on a steam locomotive'. It is a series of interesting short accounts that form a convincing picture of a life on the footplate in those distant days. Ken fired some of the greatest locomotives from the Flying Scotsman to Coltimore and Blink Bonney and says that at the time he could never have imagined the romantic associations the period evokes today.

○ FREE WI-FI FOR NORTHERN IRELAND TRANSPORT

Translink has announced that free wi-fi is to be introduced 'imminently' on its bus and rail services in Northern Ireland. They will join ScotRail, Transport for London and Transport for South Hampshire as one of the few public transport companies in the UK offering a free wi-fi service.

Another Whitland crossing collision

Three people have been injured after a lorry and a train collided at a level crossing in the second similar crash in under a year. It was at Whitland, Carmarthenshire, at what is known as the Llanboidy crossing.

Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service sent two engines to the scene. A similar incident happened at the same level crossing in December 2011 when a passenger train was involved in a crash with a lorry and trailer carrying hay.



SUPPORT WEST COAST FRANCHISE EDM

The Action for Rail Campaign is concerned by the threat to 800 Jobs on the West Coast Franchise. Gerald Kaufman MP has tabled an Early Day Motion in Parliament calling for the government and franchise bidders to reassure passengers that these jobs will not be lost.

While drivers may not be directly affected many of these Union Members are friends, family members and colleagues of ASLEF members. Many have progressed from their Grade into ours and are now ASLEF members.

The EDM (Early Day Motion) Can be found here; <http://www.parliament.uk/edm/2012-13/386>

Please sign the draft letter attached and send it your MP, notify your colleagues in the Catering Grade, ensure they do the same. Just edit your details and the details of your MP, who can be found by visiting; <http://findyourmp.parliament.uk/>

Union welcomes Scots crossing progress

A SLEF warmly welcomed last month's announcement that Network Rail is to fit barriers across every open rail level crossing in the Highlands. 'This is the first major sign of progress on the issue of level crossings for many years,' says general secretary Mick Whelan. 'At last someone is treating this major problem with the seriousness it deserves. What is regrettable is that someone has to die before any consideration is given to safety at crossings.'

In this case, the impetus for change came from three deaths at a crossing in Halkirk in Caithness in 2009. That crossing is now to have a full-size barrier which will block off the entire road while 19 others will have either this or a mini-barrier system installed in the £4 million



exercise. The first mini-barriers will be erected at Corpach, Brora, Kirkton and Dalchalm.

ASLEF's officer in Scotland, Kevin Lindsay, said the announcement was 'great news' and a step towards the sort of measures the union would like to see to protect both rail passengers and car drivers at level crossings.

● Equipment which issues spoken messages saying, 'Warning - another train is approaching' is being installed at 63 UK level crossings. Research by industry safety body RSSB suggests that voice messages are more likely to be understood and obeyed than the current two-tone warning.

Last orders called on ScotRail

A BAN on drinking or carrying alcohol on ScotRail trains after 21.00 has come into force, after a 'soft' trial period. The new clampdown will not affect Caledonian Sleepers, or cross-border trains operated by CrossCountry, East Coast and Virgin. The new rules mean that 'visible' alcohol cannot be taken on to trains, even if the containers are sealed, between 21.00 and 10.00. On-board catering staff will call 'last orders' at 20.30. Passengers who are drunk will

also be refused entry to trains.

The ban is more extreme than restrictions on some other networks, such as London Underground. Although there is a 24-hour alcohol ban on all Transport for London services, only open containers are affected. However, ScotRail said in reality staff would use 'common sense', and it is advising passengers to keep alcohol bought on a shopping trip packed away out of sight. There are no plans for random searches of bags.

British Transport Police have supported the move. ScotRail said police have dealt with at least 260 incidents on Scottish trains in the past six months in which alcohol was a factor.

ScotRail managing director Steve Montgomery said:

"Customers should be able to travel in a safe and friendly environment. 'It's time to call a halt on the irresponsible minority who spoil journeys for the majority. These individuals disrupt services, abuse staff and fellow customers, and cause accidents.'"

Protected status for Oxfordshire rail bridges

Six railway structures in Oxfordshire have been given protected status after an English Heritage consultation. They are all located along the Great Western Main Line which was designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

Amongst the structures protected is Moulsoford Viaduct in south Oxfordshire,



Six rail structures granted protected status

which has been upgraded from Grade II to Grade II*.

English Heritage described it as "one of the most impressive and imposing structures on the route". Roger Orchard, operations manager at Didcot Railway

Centre, said the bridge was "as good as gold. 'It's 175 years old and is still going strong. It definitely deserves a place in history," he said. "All the bridges Brunel designed deserve that status because they were pioneers."

ASLEF delegation pays visit to Marx Memorial Library

A delegation from ASLEF, led by general secretary Mick Whelan, recently paid a visit to the Marx Memorial Library in Clerkenwell, London, just a stone's throw from head office. They enjoyed a tour of the oldest building in Clerkenwell, which houses a lending-library of more than 40,000 books covering Marx, Lenin, the history of socialism and the British labour movement. Downstairs there is an extensive collection dedicated to the Spanish Civil war. The reference library contains a



(L-R) Brian Corbett, Marz Colombini, Tosh McDonald, Hugh Bradley, Mick Whelan and Alan Donnelly visit the Marx Memorial Library

treasure-trove of rare manuscripts, early translations of key works, and more than 43,000 pamphlets, as well as revolutionary posters and other artefacts. It was in this very building that Lenin edited the

Russian language Iskra newspaper, which was smuggled into Russia to aid the revolution. Lenin's office has been preserved and is open to visitors. www.marx-memorial-library.org



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ASLEF salutes Tolpuddle Martyrs (and has a good time!)

A SLEF banners fluttered over the Dorset village of Tolpuddle again this year at the annual event to commemorate the Martyrs who were the founding fathers of the British trade union movement – and were transported to Australia in the 1930s for their efforts.

Two of the most moving moments of the three-day festival are the procession of banners through Tolpuddle village and the laying of wreaths on the grave of James Hammett, the only Tolpuddle Martyr to return to the village.

But there is always more to enjoy, with plenty of live music which this year focussed on the work of radical US singer/songwriter Woody Guthrie as the Sunday marked a century since he was born.

As you would expect, the festival also offered the usual series of discussions and debates and the Martyrs Marquee where stalls were as keen to sell ideas as goods.

'It gets better every year,' declared National Organiser Simon Weller. 'I've already got next year's festival in my diary – it's going to be Friday 19 July until Sunday. Why not



It just wouldn't be Tolpuddle without Tony Benn, who is also in the photo of the ASLEF banners

come along and join in next year?'



ASLEF branches came together for this picture taken by Shaun Seymour



Taking part in the procession of the banners through the tiny Dorset village

Durham Miners Gala: Show of strength against austerity

T HIS year the 128th Durham Miners Gala, known locally as the "Big Meeting" was one of the biggest for many years. This was not only due to the first attendance of a Labour Party Leader in almost a quarter of a century but also due to the communities need for a show of strength against the cuts in services, wages and pensions from this Tory government's austerity programme.

Visitors travelled from far and wide; Trade unionists from Australia and Pakistan and,

from Spain, striking miners who were given a standing ovation.

It was also a special event for ASLEF with our General Secretary Mick Whelan and I invited onto the balcony of the County Hotel as the thousands of Miners and other trade unionists marched by with banners flying proud, accompanied by more than fifty Brass bands.

ASLEF stalwarts Bill Ronkesley and Ray Jackson later spoke from the platform at the racecourse.

It was an honour for ASLEF members to appear on the Durham Miners Gala Platform alongside some of the giants of the Labour movement; Tony Benn, Rodney Bickerstaff, Mark Serwotka, John Hendy QC, Bob Crow and Labour leader Ed Miliband. The presence of Tom Watson MP, fresh from battling the Murdoch empire, showed just how much ASLEF's profile has risen within the wider labour movement in recent times.

On a sad note Durham Miners Association President Davy Guy was unable to attend this year's Big Meeting as his five year battle with cancer moved into its final stage. This was the first one he had missed during his 27 years presidency and speaker after speaker made moving tribute to him.

ASLEF members from Doncaster,

Darlington, Sheffield and Newcastle in District 4 attended as well as a large contingent from District 6 who, in true ASLEF style stayed in Durham Castle (I think when they booked the accommodation they thought 'The Castle' was a pub!) District 6 EC member Dave Calfe was so impressed by the friendly atmosphere he referred to Durham as "brilliant. It's the Benidorm of the north, and in my diary from now on".

Make sure it's in yours too, July 13th 2013.

**Tosh McDonald,
EC Member District 4**



L-R: Tosh McDonald, Mick Whelan, Phil Davenport, Peter Dodgson

**MARCH FOR
A FUTURE
THAT WORKS**

JOIN US IN LONDON
**SATURDAY
20 OCTOBER 2012**
Assemble at 11am-1:30pm
for march to Hyde Park rally
(see website for joining instructions)

Send the message that
AUSTERITY ISN'T WORKING

- spending cuts threaten a lost decade
- invest for jobs and growth
- defend quality public services

TUC
Join the campaign at
www.afuturethatworks.org.uk

@futurethatworks #oct20

The future of the House of Lords – has it one?



JOHN MONKS was general secretary of the TUC for a decade up to 2003 when he became general secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation. He was made a peer in 2010 and joined the House of Lords as Baron Monks of Blackley, which is part of his home town of Manchester.

In this article he picks up the main points of a speech he gave about the future of the House of Lords to a group

of ASLEF Divisional Council members at Westminster, and considers the issue in the light of the collapse of the Clegg Bill ...

THE House of Lords is an anachronism. You would not invent it if it did not already exist. Its origins lie buried deep in the Middle Ages when kings needed to keep their friends close and their enemies closer if they were to rule in peace and prosecute foreign wars. The House of Commons came into being shortly afterwards because those kings also needed to raise money from the world of trade to cover their wars, their patronage and their own lavish living expenses; the merchants and financiers demanded a say – initially a modest one – in return.

In the 19th century, the right to vote for members of the Commons was extended first to industrialists and later to working class men. Women had to wait for it until after the First World War.

THE SENIOR CHAMBER

The Lords was often seen as the senior chamber of the two houses, until Lloyd George's budget, with new land taxes, was rejected by the Lords. After a General Election, the Parliament Act was introduced which established that the will of the Commons would ultimately prevail in any disagreement between the two Houses. Apart from the creation of life peers in the 1960s and the exclusion of most of the hereditary peers about 12 years ago, there have been few changes in the relationship, or in the Lords.

Most members are appointed on the recommendation of the leaders of political parties but there is a substantial group of cross

benchers, often people with an eminent career in public service, education, science etc, who do not take the whip of a party.

WHAT REPLACES THE LORDS?

My party, Labour, has often called for an elected second chamber, as have the Liberal Democrats. Nick Clegg persuaded the Conservatives to include a commitment to an elected Lords in the Coalition Agreement, and he duly produced a Bill which would have had

members elected for one mandate of 15 years by a system of proportional representation.

That Bill has just collapsed as many Conservative MPs would not support it while Labour would not support the use of a strict timetable to push it through.

So the Lords in its present form lives to fight another day. As in previous attempts at reform, this one basically failed because of one central problem. That is, what replaces the current system? And what would be the relationship of the new house with the Commons? For it is clear that if the second chamber is elected, it would claim greater power than the Lords currently possesses. Why would it continue to accept an inferior position to the Commons? In the USA, the House of Representatives was intended to be the principal house but after senators became elected in 1912, the Senate grabbed pre-eminence. Many in the Commons fear that the same would happen here.

I thought that the Clegg proposals were daft. A 15 year mandate with no possibility or need to stand again – how democratic is that?

TOO OLD, TOO WHITE, TOO MANY

The Lords does need reform. It is too old, too white, and there are too many of us. Yet to change it needs a new constitutional settlement in the UK which must take account of the result of the referendum on Scottish independence in 2014 and the increasingly controversial relationship with the EU and the eurozone, as well as the vexed issue of a new relationship with the Commons. That last point remains the biggest issue – how to reconcile an elected upper house without weakening the Commons.

In the meantime, I and others get on with it and continue to raise trade union voices on the crucial issues of employment, the economy, public services, transport, the NHS, etc which are considered at Westminster.



The House of Lords is too old, too white, and there are too many members

So farewell Virgin – and hello to the groupies!



**Cliff Holloway,
Secretary of the
Euston branch,
muses on the
news that Virgin
has lost its West Coast
franchise to First Group ...**

So it's farewell to the Virgin Group (for the time being anyway) - and hello to First Group from us Drivers on the Inter City West Coast franchise. And it's with a tear in the eye and a raised glass to the staff working here, that I pause to reflect on the events of the past 16 years with Virgin.

As we all know, when the Railways Act was rushed in during 1992, it enabled Treasury (our) money to be washed out of our industry and into the coffers of business. Anyone lucky enough to win a franchise was awarded with a 'heads I win, tails you lose' contract. Our old boss Richard landed the cash-starved BR jewel in the crown, Britain's railway backbone: the ramshackle, worn-out Cross Country and West Coast franchises.

His remit was straightforward: bring the outfits into the 21st century. Oh, and make a few bucks along the way. That's what the '92 Act was about. So in came the three-point big-idea strategy

- Re-contract and restructure
- Renew and expand (faster trains with more seats with bums on them)
- Flog the product

By the end of 2007, West Coast modernisation was completed. The VHF timetable came in and it has been expanded and enhanced ever since. It was a notable achievement - albeit a very expensive one to the fare-payer and the tax-payer. But even that experience wasn't enough for politicians to take the logical steps of rescinding the Act and returning us to public ownership.

Ministers, directors and managers came and went but generally Virgin delivered what it said on the tin back in '96.

So it must have put me old boss Richard's nose right out of joint when the refranchising process came round and he felt the unbalancing sensation of a rug being pulled from under his feet.

Down here on planet West Coast, we're puzzled too. On one hand, Virgin knows its business, but fails to win. So the service was a failure. Yet the winners are First Group, who

might have experience on their previous bus and rail privatisations - but what gives this untried organisation the edge over Virgin to improve the service? If the government isn't happy with the service, surely they should take it back?

Let's not kid ourselves. When it comes to franchises, it's all about the money, stupid! But does no one learn when previous bids were accepted on the basis of big financial kick-backs or next-to-nothing subsidies like Arriva

**“ WHEN IT COMES TO
FRANCHISES, IT'S ALL
ABOUT THE MONEY,
STUPID! ”**

Cross Country, East Coast or Connex? What more evidence is needed to show that the Department for Transport, and the public, were being fed undeliverable promises? We were all taken for a ride.

First Group has a reputation I hope it doesn't merit of sub-contracting anything they can and squeezing the drips from anything that's left. The pessimists see the new franchise

treating a weary road back to '96, with a worn-out fleet, a demoralised staff and a penniless public forking out some of the highest fares in Europe.

Mr Branson was clearly miffed to lose the contract. And to be fair, Virgin actually did everything that was expected of them within the terms of the Act. Yes, he made a vast amount of money but he must feel he's been shafted, and many of his staff sympathise. He's probably wondering if the upheaval of the last 16 years was worth it.

It's sad that the only recent report into UK rail is McNulty, which only proposes tinkering with a broken engine. That won't get the service running cheaper - the whole basis of the '92 Act needs to be re-examined. British Rail ran on a shoe-string compared with franchises - and was pilloried by successive governments and a hostile media for its efforts.

Meanwhile, us West Coast drivers are fast-tracking back to square one. We'll see more new uniforms, logos, publicity materials and paint jobs to cover over the cracks. We'll be inundated with consultants, bright new managers and people poking into the pension pot. Staff restructuring will probably reappear while productivity remains in the post.

There must be many national and international commentators looking at this old industry - and thinking how DaFT are we!

- **Our old fanzine - Virgin on the Ridiculous - may make a final edition. As we're all capitalists together now, we're thinking of charging 50p for ASLEF members, and £49.95 + VAT (gift aided) for managers and the public!**



Richard Branson is probably wondering if the upheaval of the last 16 years was worth it

Asbestos compensation is a postcode lottery

Lorna Webster of Thompsons Solicitors on the asbestos time bomb ...

Giving a talk recently to the ASLEF Retired Members Committee about asbestos-related diseases, confirmed to me how many former train drivers have been exposed to the deadly dust.

A straw poll revealed that all 10 committee members present knew they had been exposed to asbestos. It follows that of the union's 2,000 retired members, many (if not most) of them have been exposed too.

Of course not everyone who is exposed to asbestos goes on to develop an asbestos-related condition. And not all asbestos diseases are fatal.

But it is important to remind all members - and retired members in particular - that if they do develop an asbestos related condition, they are entitled to pursue a compensation claim against their former employer through the ASLEF legal assistance scheme.

A couple of years ago I acted for the family of ASLEF retired member Alan Terry who died just seven months after he was diagnosed with the asbestos-related cancer mesothelioma.

They received £89,000 compensation from British Rail, where he had worked from 1952 until 1996. For many years he

cleaned locomotives at Streatham Hill depot before working his way up to become a train driver in Victoria. He retired after 44 years service.

After I settled the claim against BR his brother told me that the compensation was less important than making sure Alan's employer recognised the lives it had ruined by exposing him to asbestos.

Alan was just one of numerous ASLEF members I and my colleagues have acted for over the years in relation to asbestos related diseases.

Retired members most at risk of developing asbestos related diseases are those who, like Alan, were cleaners, fitters, firemen and drivers in the days of steam and quite a few in the early days of DMUs.

SLAM DOOR CARRIAGES

Some DMU carriages were lagged with asbestos which was sprayed on at the coach works. Asbestos dust could escape from cracked and ill-fitting panels.

Many slam door carriages pulled by diesel locos were riddled with asbestos for years after the last steam loco was mothballed by British Rail.

Exposure to asbestos can lead to a number of different types of lung disease which can take 20 to



50 years or more to develop after the asbestos fibres have been inhaled.

Mesothelioma is the most serious asbestos related condition and is always fatal, usually within three to 12 months from diagnosis. Other conditions include asbestosis, a form of fibrosis which causes breathing difficulties, pleural thickening, which is a thickening of the lining of the lungs, and pleural plaques, a scarring of the lining of the lungs, almost always caused by asbestos exposure. They are normally symptomless but a cause of great anxiety because they indicate that the sufferer is at a small, but real, risk of developing a more serious condition. The right to compensation for pleural plaques was ended by the House of Lords in 2007.

POSTCODE LOTTERY

Only ASLEF members and retired members in Scotland and Northern Ireland who have been diagnosed with pleural plaques are now able to pursue claims for compensation. Members in England and Wales remain unable to do so. This is because the Supreme Court ruled last year that the Scottish Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly had the right to pass laws which restored the right to compensation. But the Westminster government has refused to end this postcode lottery by passing a similar law for the benefit of people in England and Wales suffering with pleural plaques (see ASLEF Journal November 2011)

ASBESTOS REGISTER

ASLEF launched a national asbestos register a number of years ago. This is a permanent,

structured database of information that can help to speed up the process of obtaining compensation for members who develop asbestos diseases.

The database records the names of members, their employers, the workplaces where they came into contact with asbestos and the relevant dates.

Preserving this information on a database enables the union and its solicitors to identify witnesses who worked in the same place at the same time, in order to obtain evidence in support of members' claims - now and in the future.

Members do not have to have been diagnosed with an asbestos related disease to register with the ASLEF asbestos register. Nor do they need to have absolute proof that they were exposed.

But the union does need as many names as possible on the register to help those that are already ill or become ill in the future and need to make a claim.

If you register, your information might help a former colleague. Those who register might help you. To join the register call 0808 100 8009 and ask to be sent an ASLEF asbestos questionnaire. Once completed this should be returned to the Thompsons address at the top of the form and not to ASLEF.

Any member diagnosed with an asbestos related disease should immediately call 0808 100 8009 for free advice about pursuing a compensation claim.

Members who do develop an asbestos related condition need someone on their side in the legal process of obtaining compensation - ASLEF will ensure those members are referred to solicitors who specialise in compensation claims for asbestos related conditions.



Many slam door carriages pulled by diesel locos were riddled with asbestos dust which could escape from cracked and ill-fitting panels

Health at work is as important

Health and safety at work has been taking a bruising from the media and government of late. But far from being the 'burden on business' these bigots claim, it can be a positive aid to industry. Mick Holder of the union's health and safety department makes the case – and argues that we should be paying as much attention to health at work as to safety ...

IT IS 15 years since the government's health and safety 'police', the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), reported that the annual cost to the UK economy of failing to deal with workplace health, safety and welfare issues cost some £32 billion a year – and that was a conservative estimate. It also assessed that 70% of this total was the direct result of employers' failing.

So the employers pay and this is a 'burden on business'? Not a bit of it! We – the public, the taxpayer – pay to clean up 75% of the damage caused by irresponsible employers.

If we add to this financial cost the damage done to workers and the effects on family and friends, it is evident that we need more health and safety at work – not less. But government ministers have strange minds. Now that the HSE and the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) report the lowest level of fatalities at work, notably on the railways, employers are coming under attack for being over-zealous with health and safety!

And we believe that the regulations for reporting diseases and dangerous occurrences introduced in 1995 only tell half the story. As the Hazards Campaign points out

- the 200 workplace deaths reported every

year ignore work-related road-traffic deaths and suicides attributed to work-related stress; which if included could boost this figure to 1,600

- the number of deaths caused by health problems brought on by work – like chronic lung diseases, cancers and other conditions caused by work – could, according to the TUC, account for between 20,000 – 40,000 deaths every year.

And that doesn't include occupational ill-health conditions which, while they may not kill, can be painful, long-term and even disabling.

ASLEF has agreed to participate in a new committee at the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) looking into occupational ill-health on the railways and we will be fighting for improvements throughout the industry. In this article we will examine the risks of breast and other cancers arising from shift work, and the link between diesel and cancer, making suggestions about what actions we can take to reduce risks.



THE DANGERS OF DIESEL

The United Nation's global cancer expert body, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), recently re-classified diesel exhaust fumes as carcinogenic to humans (Group 1), based on sufficient evidence that exposure is associated with an increased risk for lung cancer and limited evidence for an increased risk for bladder cancer.

IARC Director Kurt Straif said it was 'the same order of magnitude as passive smoking' and urged global efforts to 'clean up exhaust from diesel engines'.

ASLEF and others have argued for years that employers should reduce the use of diesel and exposure to diesel fumes. It is one reason that we have argued for the electrification of the railways, but despite recent government announcements, diesel units will be in use on much of the rail network into the foreseeable future.

Apart from using diesel engines in enclosed spaces we are also concerned at the effects of leaving the engine running for long periods when the train is stationary. ASLEF has issued guidance encouraging reps to get their companies to adopt a 'No idling' policy.

We have urged the ORR to encourage railway employers to reduce diesel use and exposure – and to take enforcement action if employers don't.

There is no safe 'lower exposure' level to



USEFUL H&S RESOURCES:

The ASLEF web site
www.aslef.org.uk
 TUC
www.tuc.org.uk
 Hazards magazine
www.hazards.org
 Hazards magazine on shiftwork
<http://www.hazards.org/hours/shiftwork.htm>
 Office of Rail Regulation
www.rail-reg.gov.uk
 Rail Safety and Standards Board
www.rssb.co.uk
 Health and Safety Executive
www.hse.gov.uk

Problems with shiftworking

Shift-work is not good for most people's health. Shift and night-work have been linked to a wide range of health problems, including breast cancer, prostate cancer, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, heightened accident risk, heart disease risk factors and pregnancy problems. Shift-workers, especially women, are much more likely to take early ill-health retirement – and that's on top of dealing with shifting sleep patterns and tiredness.

In 2007, IARC rated shift-work as a 'probable' cause of cancer. In May 2012 a Danish study found shift-working women were twice as likely to have breast cancer. An HSE-backed study in June indicated breast cancer linked to nightshift work is the second most common occupational cancer in the UK. In June in the International Journal of Cancer a study concluded the risk of developing breast cancer was 30% higher in women who had worked nights compared to women who had never worked nights.

It appears from the studies that the more night work

women do, the greater the risk.

SHIFTWORKING CHECKLIST

We should all try to

- minimise permanent nights
 - minimise sequence of nights, work shifts in succession
 - consider shorter night shifts
 - avoid quick change-overs
 - plan rotas with some free weekends
 - avoid overlong work sequences
 - rotate forward (that is, clockwise through evenings/ nights);
 - avoid early starts.
 - ensure proper rest time between the end of one week's shifts and the start of the following week's shifts
- Further guidance can be found in the section of the ASLEF web site.

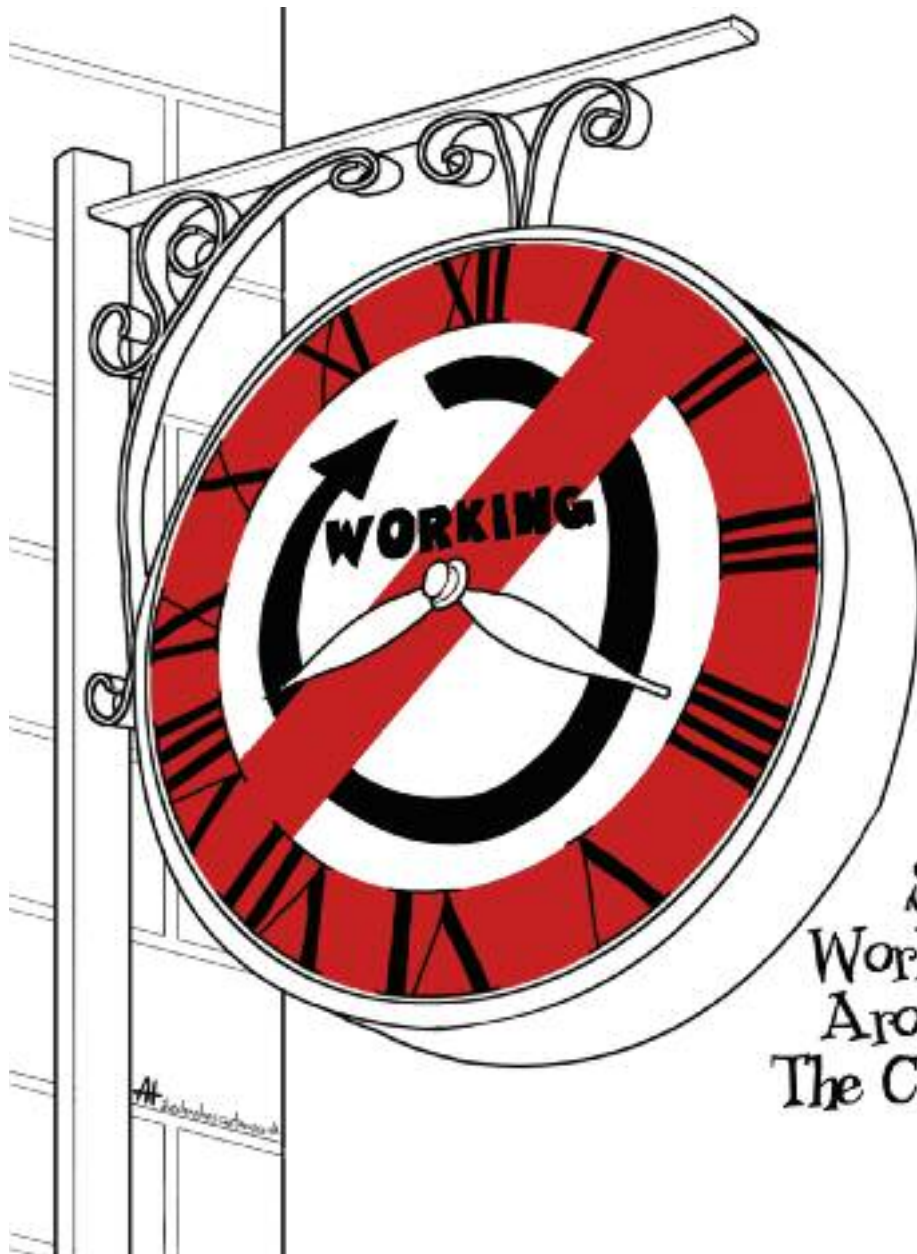
as safety

carcinogens, so zero exposure is the only completely safe option. While ASLEF accepts this is not achievable in the short-term, we continue to argue that the government and HSE should adopt a standard of 0.01 mg per cubic metre while working towards zero exposure. ASLEF reps can also use this as a basis for starting negotiations.

DIESEL CHECKLIST FOR REPS

Using your rights as an ASLEF Health and Safety Representative:

- Talk to members and identify problem areas
- Point out the concerns raised in this article to members, explaining what ASLEF recommends they tell their GP and why (see 'What should I do?' below)
- Raise any problems locally and put them in the Company Joint Safety Committee machinery
- Get employers to adopt a 'diesel fumes reduction' policy or agreements which include 'no idling' and use that as a basis for negotiating improvements.
- Get employers to look at ways of reducing the creation of diesel fumes. Efforts should be made to find engineering solutions. Providing personal protection is a last resort
- Keep ASLEF's Executive Committee informed and if necessary ask them for backing
- Keep electrification of the railway and reducing exposure to diesel fumes on the Company Joint Safety Committee agendas.



Stop
Working
Around
The Clock!

SHIFTWORKING CHECKLIST: FOR REPS

Use your rights as an ASLEF Health and Safety Representative to

- find out if members have any problems working shifts. (Remember this can be a sensitive issue, has equal opportunities implications and that shiftwork is an issue for men and women).
- draw this article to your members' attention, especially the 'What should I do?' section
- find out if the people who set rosters and diagrams have had fatigue risk management training and if they take health issues into account when drawing rotas up
- raise any issues locally and with the Company Joint Safety Committee and Company Council.
- develop a Company Council shift-work policy and organise fatigue risk management training.
- inform your District Organiser and ASLEF's Executive Committee of any issues taken up and of any progress (or lack of it).

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

- Everyone should get their GP to record what work they do as a matter of course
- If you feel you have been exposed to hazardous chemicals at work (such as diesel exhaust fumes or asbestos) or you work shifts, it is best to have this information on your GP's records.

This will help your doctor make better and speedier diagnosis in the unlikely event something goes wrong in the future. It also helps if something does go wrong and you wish to make a personal injury claim against an employer.

.. AND WHAT SHOULDN'T I DO?

- Don't rush to the doctors and demand x-rays and scans. Unnecessary X-rays, scans and invasive tests should be avoided. They are useful diagnostic tools, but can also be hazardous to your health and so should only be used if there is a suspicion of something being wrong. Other testing is generally preferable such as lung function tests.

And remember – even if you have been exposed to a hazardous substance or work method it doesn't mean you will get ill. You just need to ensure your GP knows – just in case.

Driver Harrison's photographs: An era in images

GEORGE Harrison is a man who enjoys his history. As he drives from the station to his tidy home and spotless garden, he tells me about the station building, points out where the seventh century Augustine Stone Priory used to stand and gives me the low-down on the cricket ground. He has a sense of pride in his surrounds – and his profession.

As we sit munching a salad made largely of fresh produce from his allotment, George's enthusiasm for his railway career is infectious. 'I wanted to put a book together because I think it's so important that we remember the past. Time passes so quickly that in a few years there won't be anyone who can tell you about driving steam trains. Not first hand. Those wonderful old machines won't come back – and if they did, no one would know what to do with them!

'We're walking history.'

He always had an appreciation of the locomotives he began working on when he first began to clean them at Stoke on Trent Sheds in 1956. He always carried a camera with him, and snapped away at the 'wonderful machines'. The book he has now produced – 'Tales from the Footplate of Steam' – is made up of a short introduction and some 174 black-and-white photos he has taken over the years, along with others by Maurice Newman and John Ford. The overwhelming majority of the photos are of steam trains he has known, with interesting and homely captions describing where he saw or drove them. The other



Retired 20 years, George still hasn't discovered the attractions of an arm-chair!

illustrations are of personal memorabilia, like his first contract of employment, route knowledge cards and Mutual Improvement Class membership cards.

George joined the railway from school, although his parents wanted him to 'get a trade'. They suggested TV repairs. 'That job is more obsolete than steam train driving now!' he says with a smile. He says he's never regretted the path he took, adding that he's never regretted anything he's done. It's a good philosophy for keeping a man bright in retirement.

'It wasn't always an easy life on steam. It was hard work and the working days were often long. But it wasn't as difficult as putting

this book together!' George wrote out the introduction in long-hand but the real problem was organising his photographs from the hundreds he has collected over the years. 'I didn't realise how many I had. There were boxes and boxes of them,' he says. 'It's much easier to take photos than organise them. They were the key things – organisation and discipline.'

George says that now when he looks at the pictures in his book, he recognises every single shot. Then he pauses and smiles broadly. 'Which is amazing – considering I can't tell you what I was doing half an hour ago!'

He regularly meets up with other railmen and enthusiasts and enjoys reunions and excursions they organise. Shortly after we meet, he says, he's off for a couple of days to Ffestiniog where they are going to have a trip on the Welsh Highland Railway. I turn to George's wife, Anne and say that will be nice.

'Would be,' she says with a long-suffering glance. 'I'm not invited. It's only for the boys.'

I move on hastily. So what, I ask, was the attraction of steam engines? George looks at me in some surprise, as if I am rather deficient not to know the answer to such an easy question. 'You become part of a working team, and you are travelling on a living, breathing machine. And there's the independence – you're your own boss when you pull out onto the track.'

As he speaks, he thumbs through his book, each image reminding him of some adventure, old colleague or length of the P-way. 'I didn't dislike the job when we moved to diesel,' he says. 'But they never had the same glamour. My favourites were the Scots. Oh, and the Jubilees. And the Patriot class.' He laughs. 'Well, all of them!'

'I've always liked this part of the world,' George tells me. 'I know most drivers ended up in London for a few years and I nearly went to Cricklewood or Neasden. But then I had a look and thought, 'No. That's not for me.'

'But it hasn't stopped me travelling. We've been all over, often using my boxes. When I was young there was a chap in my Mutual Improvement class who organised trips. I



This shows 43108 standing on Number One road at Saltley ready for work in August 1965



The first picture in the book shows Driver J. Harding and the author on 44068 after working the Stoke-Poole Dam trip



George took this photo of 47231 when he was working from Kings Norton to Lifford in May 1967



This was the last day George drove for British Rail. He worked a Taunton charter on 6 October 1979



Job done! George takes a rest with the fruit of his labour!

remember twenty of us setting off to Copenhagen with a block pass. All over, we went. Oberammergau. Brussels. Once I fired a train from Bonne to Cologne, which is I suppose an odd way to spend your holiday! We were all men, mind. We didn't have ladies with us!

Mindful of the impending Ffestiniog outing, I push on hastily to ask about family. To my relief, George tells me that both he and Anne went to Australia, where he has a son. As this is a second marriage for both of them, they have the good fortune of a large family with children in Dorset and a total of nine grandchildren!

Finally we return to his producing his book. 'The worse thing for me was sitting at a desk,' he says. 'It isn't me. I like to keep moving – walking, caravanning or working on the allotment. I've been retired for 20 years now, and I'm still not happy sitting in a chair. Well, unless there is a John Wayne film showing ...!'

- Anyone wanting to buy a copy of George's book can do so by contacting him by phone (01785 815026) or by writing to him at 1 Jordan Way, Stone, Staffordshire ST15 8PD. The cost is £10 for the book and another two for postage and packing.



The book identifies this loco as 33004 0-6 Q1 Austerity Bullied design. It is pictured in August 1965



One of George's favourite locos were the Jubilees. His longest firing job on these 'greatly noisy' engines was the 224 miles from Water Orton to Carlisle



George has never been a man for throwing things away - as this collection of his old log books testify. He's even got the route knowledge for Saltley sidings

A HUNDRED YEARS OF UNION

Notta Bene records the news and events from September 1912 ...

It was recently announced that Hitachi is coming to County Durham to make British trains. The position in 1912 was very different ...

"...the latest development of a locomotive testing machine, which has been made for a Japanese railway by W. & T. Avery Ltd., of the Soho Foundry, Birmingham. The machine has a capacity of 360,000lb., and automatically indicates the weight on each wheel, so that any variation can at once be rectified, and so prevent serious damage to the locomotive. This massive combination of 12 weigh-bridges is contained in a cast-iron frame, 2ft 4in. deep and each of the platforms are connected to a

quadrant, which automatically indicates the weight on each wheel immediately the locomotive is in position for weighing."

With the move towards implementing the ERTMS train safety management system throughout Europe, in 1912 they were hailing their own new technology:

"Wireless train control: Mr. Frank W. Prentice, the inventor of the wireless system of train control, gave an interesting demonstration before the Central Railway Club, at the Hotel Statler, Buffalo, New York, last month. The demonstration created the liveliest interest among the members and guests, and the general impression among the large body of railwaymen present was of the most favourable kind. The method of installing the wireless control is to divide the stretch of track into blocks varying in length from 2,500ft. to 4,500ft. At the end of each block is a

generator of wireless waves. A broken rail or open switch will stop the generator, thus placing the block at the rear at danger by the absence of the wave."

With serious news from outside the union, Notta Bene reports:

"Celluloid tragedies: The verdict of "accidental death" returned by the jury in the Moor Lane (London) fire case ...recommended that the Home Office should exercise stringent control of places where celluloid was dealt with in any quantity. As a result of the fire, eight girls lost their lives. Now, in my opinion, it is not enough to supervise warehouses and other premises where celluloid articles are stored and handled. The manufacture of such articles should be legally forbidden."

○ **Extracts selected and edited by Mick Holder**



**YOU'D THINK THE GOVERNMENT
HAD BETTER THINGS TO DO THAN
ATTACK YOUR RIGHTS AT WORK.**



IT'S NOT AS IF THIS COUNTRY was exactly short of issues. We face urgent problems like a stricken economy, record youth unemployment and the gap between the super-rich and everyone else. Yet the government is devoting precious time and energy to attack, of all things, rights at work.

TUC

A stealthy series of changes that add up to a wholesale assault.

Already an extra year to wait for protection against unfair sackings, with reduced maternity rights and more dangerous workplaces in the pipeline. These sly attacks have nothing to do with getting the economy moving. They

come from the same people who fought the minimum wage and paid holidays.

By slicing away a bit at a time, they hope no-one will notice. But we have, and you should too.

Visit the website to find out more, and tell ministers they've been rumbled.

**EMPLOYEE RIGHTS
STOP
EMPLOYMENT WRONGS**

VISIT WWW.STOPEMPLOYMENTWRONGS.ORG.UK TO FIND OUT MORE

WANTED



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**interested in being sponsored to
attend conferences as visitors**

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union and see how
conferences work**

**UPCOMING CONFERENCES INCLUDE
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and TUC congress**

**CONTACT Wendy Hurst, Secretary of
ASLEF's women's committee**
Tel: 07788 153 932 or email wendy.hurst3@ntlworld.com

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First  **Great Western**

JOHN EMMERSON POPULAR SPORTSMAN

It is with much sadness that I have to report the sudden death of retired driver John Emmerson aged just 63. John was a Leeds lad, and started his railway career there before moving to York Depot in the 1980s. He was a bubbly character who was always willing to join in the messroom banter. John was a loyal ASLEF member and was always popular with his colleagues.

An excellent snooker player, John quickly made our Depot

Snooker Championship his own. Nobody really wanted to be drawn against him, as they knew they would have no chance. Yours truly had the misfortune to be drawn against him several times, but the longest I lasted was when the bulb went out during one of our games! John had a real passion for golf, and yes he excelled at that as well, playing off a 5 handicap. He organised the staff golf days on behalf of the Motive Power social club.

I expected a good attendance for John's funeral service but I could never have imagined that so many people would turn up. The place was packed to the rafters, with many more listening to the service outside. A fitting send-off for a really nice guy.

At this sad time our thoughts are with his widow Janet and her family. Their emotional tributes read out at the funeral left us all in no doubt how much they will miss John. R.I.P. John. **A.B.Penn, retired member, York**



John Emmerson was a bubbly and lively colleague

STEVE TITHRIDGE COURAGE AND DIGNITY



Doncaster mourns Steve Tithridge

It is my sad duty to report the death of Doncaster Branch member Steve Tithridge age 50. Steve passed away on Wednesday 9 May following a courageous and dignified fight against cancer.

Steve was a dedicated and enthusiastic railwayman who started his career as a Driver's Assistant at Eastleigh in 1981, before taking up a vacancy at Healey Mills. He then transferred to Warrington after promotion to a Driver before returning to Healey Mills in 1991.

Following the financial crash in 2008 and the subsequent threat to jobs in the freight sector Steve volunteered to transfer to Doncaster in 2009.

While at Doncaster Steve regularly attended branch meetings even when undergoing treatment for his condition.

Steve was a well-respected and extremely knowledgeable member of the railway fraternity. Steve is survived by his wife Pauline and our thoughts are with her at this sad time.

K Beresford, Secretary, Doncaster Branch

DEREK BARNETT NEVER FORGOTTEN

Derek joined the Railway at Newton Abbot on 19 April 1954, moving to Reading the following year to obtain his fireman job. He married Deanne in 1957 and they had four children together.

Derek became a driver in 1973 and worked on the footplate until his retirement in 2004 after 50 years of service. Sadly, he passed away on the 5 January after spending six months in hospital. He is greatly missed by all who knew him, especially Deanne, his four children and his 14 grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Martin Bromage-Griffiths, Branch Reporter

GAVYN GROVE A LIFE TOO SHORT

Bletchley branch has the sad duty to report the sudden passing of Driver Gavyn Grove in June, five days before what would have been his 44th birthday. The cause of Gav's death was due to a previously undiagnosed heart condition which ultimately resulted in his arteries blocking.

Gav was a keen Battle of Britain enthusiast and made frequent visits to Whyteleafe cemetery in Surrey where his great-uncle Harry, a Battle of Britain Hawker Hurricane pilot is buried in Airman's corner. Gav also had interests in trains and motor racing and was a keen modeller, making many replicas of his interests. In addition Gav was a big Liverpool FC fan. More importantly he was a devoted husband to wife Donna and father to children Lexie, 5, and Connor, 10 months. He also leaves two children from a previous relationship.

At the Northampton satellite link of Bletchley depot he was well liked and respected by fellow train crews, platform staff and managers alike for his professional and confident conduct as a driver, as well as being a thoroughly nice person.

He was a loyal branch member, never afraid to ask advice but more importantly, never afraid to take the advice even if he did not necessarily agree with it. Gav's funeral service was well attended, standing room only in the chapel. A private family committal was followed by a reception to celebrate Gav's life at the Northampton British Rail club which was also packed.

Gav will be greatly missed. Our thoughts are with Donna, Lexie and Connor at this sad time. **Graham Croucher, Secretary, Bletchley Branch**

WILF BURBRIDGE STRONG VIEWS, WELL LIKED

With sadness I report the death of Wilf Burbridge, 77, following a short illness. An Oldham man, Wilf began his footplate career at the Lees Road shed as a cleaner in August 1950.

Following National Service he returned to the depot until it closed and he was transferred to Newton Heath, where he remained until retirement at Manchester Victoria. Despite having strong views on all subjects Wilf was always popular at the depot. In retirement Wilf enjoyed traveling around Europe by rail, seeing it from behind a loco with his wife. Our thoughts are with her at this sad time.

S Black, Retired Members Section, Newton Heath RMS

IVOR EVANS HARDWIDGE NEWBURY AND BRISTOL

We said farewell to Ivor at All Saints Church, Long Ashton in May. Ivor made his final departure in a wicker casket, adorned with fruit and vegetables! His great loves were cricket, GWR, allotments and, primarily, his wife. She recalled how she suffered comments from TSSA colleagues when they discovered her relationship with an ASLEF man, she herself being a clerk in the Oxford area. So, a sad farewell in a lovely village, on a beautiful day, to a man whose footplate days will be best remembered at Newbury and Bristol Bath Road.

Graham Bellamy, retired member, Bristol

BILLY RUSSELL EC MEMBER AND DISTRICT SECRETARY

It is with great sadness that I have to report the passing of former EC member William 'Bill' Russell on 15 June after a typically brave fight against cancer.

Bill was a proud Scot, being born in Livingston on 13 January 1937.

After leaving school, Bill joined the army – eventually becoming a tank driver. On leaving the army he joined the railways as a cleaner,

then fireman. At Barrow Hill Depot he finally became a driver and on its closure in 1991 he moved to Worktop where he remained until his retirement in October 1999.

Bill was a stalwart ASLEF member, serving as a local rep, district councillor, and finally as EC member for District 4. But he recalled his happiest and fondest memories were when he served

on sectional council 'B'.

Brimington Crematorium was standing room only, with some mourners having to remain outside for his funeral. I know that Anne (Bill's widow) and the family were touched that so many ASLEF members were present, including Bill Ronksley, Tony West, Ray Jackson and Fred Orton Jones from the RMS, not to mention our General Secretary and ASLEF reps

from every level from local to national.

Bill will be sadly missed by ASLEF. Let me finish with these words I know Bill would approve of:

Land of my high endeavour
Land of the shining river
Land of my heart forever
Scotland the brave.

K Gillett, Branch Secretary, Works



Mick's painting hangs in the lobby of our new head office

**MICK JONES
ASLEF PAINTER**

Mick Jones, son of the late trade unionist Jack Jones, sadly passed away last week. Mick was an artist by profession and was renowned for painting large scale murals

especially in the Camden area during the eighties. He was part of the Camden art scene at the time and helped paint both the Fitzrovia mural, just off of Tottenham Court Road, and the Hackney 'peace mural' outside Dalston Junction station. Mick painted

a triptych (a piece of art divided into three sections) for ASLEF which hang proudly in the lobby at head office and we are very fortunate to have them; our thoughts and condolences go to his family and close ones at this time. He will be sorely missed.

**BOB BROWN AN
UNASSUMING MAN**

It is with extreme regret that I report the untimely passing of retired driver Bob Brown aged 63.

Bob was an unassuming character, never seeking the limelight, who got on with the job without fuss or bother but with a high degree of competency. He started on the railway at

Cricklewood Depot in 1973 as a guard becoming a driver at St Pancras after Cricklewood shut in 1984. In 1993 when Thameslink withdrew from St Pancras he moved to Bedford opting to remain living in Elstree and Borehamwood.

Away from the footplate he established his excellence at fishing especially for Conger eels for which he won several competitions. He took part in sea fishing with Bedford Depot's team. His other passions were railways, especially models, and music. He was a season ticket holder at Queens Park Rangers.

He achieved one of his ambitions which was to retire at 60 but sadly not his desire to become self-sufficient by buying a small-holding based on his experience with members of his family who crofted in the Shetlands. Before he could do this Bob was suddenly taken ill at home and despite the attentions of the paramedics never recovered.

A large contingent of railwaymen from all grades attended his funeral to say their final farewells to a quiet man who earned the respect of all his colleagues. He will be sadly missed by his family, friends and to his brother, Keith and his family, we offer our sincere condolences.

RIP Bob
Bill Davies, Retired Members Section, Bedford

**MARTIN GEE-WOOLLEY ONLY 56**

It is with great sadness that I have to report the passing of Bro Martin Gee-Woolley after a comparatively short illness.

Martin started on the railway as a guard at Three Bridges depot in 1982. After a brief stint at Redhill he transferred to Norwood Loco as a driver in 1989. Martin then returned to Three Bridges in 1993 where he remained until his untimely death in June, aged just 56.

Martin was a larger than life character who always had a smile on his face. He served on the LDC for a number of years and was always happy to offer advice and support.

His funeral was very well attended by members past and present, such was his popularity. Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife Stephanie, daughter Rachel and son Harry. R.I.P Martin, it was a pleasure to have known you. You will be greatly missed by all of us here at Three Bridges depot.

A Hind, Chair, Three Bridges Branch

NIGEL DARTNELL ALWAYS A PLEASURE TO WORK WITH

It is with great regret that I have to inform you of the passing of our retired Brother Nigel Dartnell at the age of 76.

After a childhood spent in the town and schools of Stamford, Nigel joined British Rail at Peterborough as an engine cleaner and progressed through the ranks to driver. He served his National Service with the Army in Ismalia, Egypt, where he received a medal for active service. With his dry Lincolnshire humour and his expansive knowledge of fishing, local cricket and crown green bowling it was always a pleasure to be rostered with Nigel. Our thoughts go out to his widow Gwynneth and his daughter Sharon at this sad time.

Simon Bell, Secretary, Peterborough Branch

Firsts For Salisbury!

Salisbury branch had two firsts in June. After the branch meeting, it unveiled a new branch banner and had its first-ever badge presentation event.

Marz Colombini, EC Member District 1, presented badges to eight drivers, one of whom, the longest serving who had completed 35 years, arrived after the proceedings as he'd forgotten the date!

Our banner has been a long time in



Marz Colombini looks on as Salisbury branch chair Richie Bennett and branch secretary Annie Rutter share a joke across the line up of drivers who received badges

the planning but was worth the wait. It will have its debut at Tolpuddle this year.

The evening was well attended and everybody had a good time, especially

enjoying the buffet and drinks that were laid on. Here's hoping it will be the first of many.

Annie Rutter, Secretary, Salisbury Branch

Skipton meeting just like the good old days

On 8 July, Skipton branch combined a branch meeting and a long service badge presentation at the town's Railway Inn.

General Secretary Mick Whelan gave a great report to the substantial number of past and present members in attendance and also did the honours presenting the badges. A large cheer and sustained round of applause was given to John Seward who was awarded his 50-year medallion.

Everyone was of the opinion that the union was now in a great and safe pair of hands.

Also in attendance were retired President Bill Ronskley and former Company Council

rep Ray Jackson – and it was pleasing to see them both as sharp as ever. Bill made the comment that the meeting 'was just like the old days'.

It was a wonderful afternoon as the drink flowed



Left: Mick Whelan is pictured between ex-ASLEF President Bill Ronskley and the union's retired members section, Ray Jackson. Right: Good old days return to Skipton - GS with retired President Bill Ronskley



across the bar – thanks to landlord Ian for keeping up with the demand! And thanks too to the GS for making the journey 'up north' on a Sunday afternoon.

And last - but by no means least - thanks to all those branch members who attended to make the afternoon so memorable.

Martin Exley, Secretary, Skipton branch

Speirs cuts out of Preston

On the last Saturday in July, the Preston branch gathered at Lostock Hall Catholic Club to celebrate the retirement of Bro Paul Speirs.

Paul has been an active member of ASLEF throughout his rail career and served for many years as a local drivers representative at Preston. Despite deciding to retire early to pursue his various hobbies, Paul still managed to notch up an impressive 38 years' service with the railway and ASLEF.

Paul's wife Jean was a welcome guest at the event, and we were able to present her with a large bouquet of flowers.

Graham Fazackerley, Reporter, Preston branch

Newton Heath's top day at 'The Millgate'

Good weather plus the new 12-minute 'Metro Service' helped to ensure there was a big turnout at this 'excellent venue'. Retired and active staff from the depot were joined by friends and many retired colleagues from several other depots who had spent active time at Newton Heath at some point in their career. Our thanks go to the Branch Chairperson, Secretary and '105 committee' for running this annual event, with thanks on the day due to Mike Wood, Doug Oser and Johnny Pat for arranging a superb buffet and raffle.

But again special thanks must go to each of our '105 members' who support this great day with their continued generosity. Thanks to you all.

S. Black, Retired Members' Section, Newton Heath

MARCH CONTINUES 13 YEARS LATER!

We held a reunion lunch of the March depot on Sunday 22 July. When the depot was formally closed on 24 July 1999, there were 20 remaining members. Of these, eight were found places at Peterborough depot, while twelve (eleven 'old boys' and one not so old!) took redundancy.

The dozen who took redundancy meet, with their wives, on or near to the date of the anniversary of the closure each year to enjoy each other's company once more. We often invite 'Uncle Brian', our favorite depot manager, and our former ASLEF leader Lew Adams as guests. To mark our 10th anniversary in 2009 we organized our lunch on a cruise boat at Hartford marina.

This year's event was held at Cassano's restaurant in March, when Sunday lunch was enjoyed by the group.

Francis Pepper, Reunion lunch organiser

Upcoming events

CRICKLEWOOD REUNION: 28 SEPTEMBER

The next Cricklewood reunion will be held on Friday 28 September at the RAFA club in Ashburnham Road, Bedford from 12.00 noon onwards. For further information contact G. Nash at Bristol or R. Hodson in Wolverhampton.

GATESHEAD & NEWCASTLE: 15 NOVEMBER

The annual Gateshead & Newcastle /NERSWA reunion will be held on Thursday 15 November at the Gateshead Railway Club from 13:00 onwards. All current and former staff are welcome and a buffet will be provided. For further information contact branch secretary Rob Porter.

HITHER GREEN: 16 NOVEMBER

The next reunion will be held on Friday 16 November in the Hither Green Railway and CIU Club, Beacon Road, SE12 commencing at 18:00 hours. Everyone connected with Hither Green, past or present, is welcome. For further information contact branch secretary John Staggs.



These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the **ASLEF Journal at 77 St John Street London, EC1M 4NN** or by email to **journal@aslef.org.uk**. Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can. This month we continue our **STAR LETTER feature**. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!

Freight success story – we're still here

Where, in the government's latest announcement on rail investment and upgrades is the mention of rail freight? It is almost conspicuous by its absence.

The obstacles and threats to the future of freight on rail have been given a higher profile by ASLEF's campaigning and the Rail freight Group, headed by Lord Berkley. But is anyone listening? Rail freight faces even more problems from the threat of vertical integration and now the ORR is pressing for business to accept higher Track Access charges, on what is already a 'marginal' business.

Is rail freight privatisation a success? Well, the fact that it operates without subsidy and there is still some freight left could count as a success!

Outside the intermodal operation, rail freight has retrenched in its 'traditional heavy' haul traffic to a niche operation, running one or two days a week, as required.

Promises of investment in freight facilities stumble along, or are quietly side-lined. Even the cross-country upgrade from Felixstowe Docks to the Midlands and the much vaunted line at Ipswich seems virtually impossible!

If the road to Hell is paved with good intentions, members in the freight companies must be nearly there.

Yours fraternally,
J.P. Morgan, Freightliner Intermodal Driver, Ipswich

Case for elected head of state

Giles Wilson criticises previous letter writers (ASLEF Journal Letters - July 2012) for '...becoming wearisome with [its] repeated swipes at the Royal Family' and advises readers to, '...save us the gleeful, snide comments'. While Mr Wilson may be weary, his trivialisation of the issues, by comparing the monarchy to red buses and phone boxes cannot go unchallenged.

The idea that it is right for the UK population to be governed through an aristocratic system that relies on the principle that the next head of state is born to the role through an 'accident of birth' is

PRIVS FOR DIRECTORS – BUT NOT US!

As a driver of some 27 years' service I work for a company which through no fault of its own cannot provide priv's or passes. What does annoy me however is that most 'heritage' railways are, by ATOC's rules, allowed to give their paid staff priv cards for National Rail. These are not just pre-'94 staff as on the real railway - but to anyone who is paid and joins anytime.

My real gripe however is that directors of these railways also qualify. Not only that - but they often get first class priv cards! These are mainly volunteers who work in high-paid jobs from the legal professions and the banking sector among others. This privilege also applies to their families!

How can it be right that many of our members have to pay huge amounts for travel for ourselves and university-bound children - while 'Mr Banker with his big train set' sends his kids first class for a fraction of the price.

ATOC should either issue all rail staff with priv cards or put a stop to these freeloaders. I think that even in the unlikely event of us all getting passes again the practice of first class travel for these people should stop anyway.

Finally, when I had passes I was taxed on them. You can bet your bottom dollar most of these people aren't paying taxes on them!

Russ Pigott, Driver, DRS Stowmarket

both absurd and insulting to the British people.

The Royal family is not a mere symbol of the UK, which goes around opening hospitals and addressing the nation on Christmas Day. It is an institution with real power, even when checked in the form of a Constitutional Monarchy. The Monarch's capability to exercise Royal Prerogative, to refuse Royal Assent to legislation, to grant or refuse the dissolution of Parliament, to exercise power through the 'Crown in Parliament' and to be Supreme Governor of the Church of England are all real powers that have a bearing on the day-to-day lives of the Monarch's subjects - and are much, much more than red buses.

While the current Monarch, and some of the senior members of the Royal family have carried out the role they were handed well (on the whole), that does not replace the fact that I, and many others, do not want to be governed by a head of state who is born to the role rather than elected.

Sure, the Monarchy puts on a good show of pageantry and an alternative may not be much more cost effective, but this is an issue of democracy. The UK is known worldwide as the 'mother of parliaments',

yet we, in the UK, in 2012, live in a country where we have a hereditary monarch and a second legislative chamber that is unelected. That, Mr Wilson, is not democracy.

While the UK continues with its undemocratic structure of governance, hundreds of brave men and women of the UK's Armed Forces have paid the 'ultimate sacrifice' in 'bringing democracy' to, and establishing 'democratic institutions' in both Iraq and Afghanistan. The irony that Iraq and Afghanistan are more democratic than the UK cannot go unnoticed.

Keep your buses and phone boxes if you want Mr Wilson, but the time for a democratically elected head of state is now.
Julian Morison, Driver, SWT Bournemouth

Wales is a country - not a principality

I am so annoyed that once again Wales/Cymru has been referred to as a 'principality' in the pages of the August Journal.

It is not a 'principality'. It is a country. And I would ask that homework is done at head office and elsewhere within this great union to

rectify and stop this misconception ever occurring again.

G. J. Thorne, Wolverhampton

Sectioned at last!

I recently took early retirement 'from the footplate' after 32 and a half years in line of promotion.

In today's post I received my retired member's section diary, card and badge. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and all concerned for the protection, comradeship and family that is ASLEF.

While not being an activist, I have, during my career, held the view that the support of ASLEF for and by its members is absolutely vital. Long live the union. My sincere best wishes.

David James Lake, retired member, Cambridge

Thanks for all your kindness

I would like to thank all ASLEF members at Croydon Tramlink and so many other branches for your generous donations after the sad loss last October of your brother, and my partner,

Tony Fifield.

You launched an appeal for financial assistance for me and our three children and I have been overwhelmed by the response by so many people and branches. We have greatly benefited from the funds received during this very hard and sad time.

I cannot thank you enough.
Shirley (Maxine, Dominic and Xanda) Fifield, Croydon

Thanks to Bob Hodson

Following the announcement regarding the future of the West Coast franchise, now seems a fitting moment to pay tribute to Bob Hodson.

Bob served the driving grade and ASLEF with distinction. He was a drivers' company councillor for some 17 years and chairman for eight, right up to his retirement. Before that he served as a local level rep at both Cricklewood and Wolverhampton.

His commitment, determination and drive to do what he thought to be right for the grade was equalled only by his vociferous opposition to anything from the other side of the table that didn't match his beliefs. Bob is still active in the retired

members section and enjoys a busy social life with time spent on the Severn Valley Railway as they serve his favourite tippie either end!

On behalf of all those who know him and served with him, we'd like to wish Bob a long and thoroughly deserved retirement.

Si Goode, Wolverhampton Branch

COMPANY NEWS

REST DAY WORKING

Arriva Trains Wales

Sanctioned until 29 September

Merseyrail

Not sanctioned beyond 31 August

CrossCountry

Sanctioned until 29 September

INDUSTRIAL ACTION BALLOTS

LUL (Jubilee Line)

Ballot over failure to consult closes 20 Sept

LUL (Test Train Drivers)

Ballot short of a strike over Driverless Trains closes 20 Sept

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To advertise in the ASLEF Journal please phone 020 7324 2400 or send email to journal@aslef.org.uk



MOTHERWELL 100 REGALIA: To celebrate its centenary, Motherwell Branch has produced commemorative badges (£5), ties (£7 for blue, blue clip-on or maroon) and brochures (£2.50). Cheques to 'ASLEF Motherwell Branch Centenary Fund' and further information from Andy Jones on 07767077907 or motherwellbs@aslef.org.uk



WOKING HOMES BADGE to raise money for this excellent charity and home for retired rail staff. Badges are £3 each plus £1 for postage on any order. Please make cheques payable to Woking Homes and send cheques to Woking Homes, Oriental Road, Woking, Surrey, GU22 7BE



A VERY LIMITED NUMBER (25) OF THE KING'S LYNN ASLEF BRANCH CENTENARY BADGE (2006) have been reproduced and are available at £10 inc. P & P from M Steele, 1 Rosecroft, South Wootton King's Lynn Norfolk PE30 3WX or Telephone 07788 153954.



CITY OF LONDON BADGES, one 10-year and one depot badge. Depot badges are numbered 1-150. There are only 150 of each. Price £5 plus £1 p&p. All profits to City of London branch funds to acquire a branch banner. Further information or orders to Colin Dawson 01689 849 543 or 22 Hutchison Road, New Addington, Croydon, Surrey CR0 0BD.

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ENGRAVING: ASLEF driver based in Sunderland branch offers professional engraving at reasonable prices. I can engrave anything you wish, such as the ASLEF logo on a pint tankard which is pictured. For further details contact Paul Potts by email at ppotts1969@hotmail.co.uk



FAVERSHAM BRANCH (077) has finally launched its 25th Anniversary ASLEF/NUM badge. They cost £10 each including P&P. A few Faversham Branch Centenary badges remain available at £5 each including P&P. To order please contact the Branch Secretary, Steve Gurdler, 18 Hunters Way West, Chatham, Kent ME5 7HL. steve.gurdler@aslefonline.co.uk or 07941 110473



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This picture from the Guardian shows a queue at an Athens food shop

What's happening in Greece? – and what you can do about it

In the UK we've seen only 20% of the cuts the Con-Dem government has in store for us. If you want to see the logical end of this process, go to Greece which is being used as the test bed for extreme 'austerity measures' says **PAUL MACKNEY, Chair of the Greece Solidarity Campaign (former UCU general secretary and TUC general council member ...**

YOU don't expect to find working people queuing in food lines in modern European cities but you'll see them in Greece. These are not generally lines of poorly clothed people but people who have recently been impoverished.

Their distress is the direct result of conditions imposed, in return for loans to bail out bank debts, by the so-called Troika (the International Monetary Fund, The European Central Bank and the European Union).

A DELEGATION TO GREECE

A solidarity delegation, sponsored by Tony Benn, went to Greece, in March 2012 in response to an invitation from two world war two resistance fighters – Manolis Glezos (famous for pulling the swastika down from the Acropolis) and Mikis Theodorakis (composer of Zorba the Greek).

Our trip was both harrowing and inspiring. The people of Greece, after five years of recession, are being bled dry. One in three lives are in poverty. Many shops and small businesses are now empty, with 'for rent' signs on display.

GREECE'S SOCIAL FABRIC IS BEING TORN APART

We were appalled by 20% unemployment, 50% youth unemployment, a quarter of a million depending on humanitarian handouts



and food lines, and mass homelessness particularly for non-Greeks.

Wages have been slashed, often by up a third, in some cases retrospectively. 400,000 are owed back pay. National collective bargaining and agreements have been abolished and employment rights slashed.

The minimum wage for adults has been reduced by 22% (for youth by 33%), unemployment benefit (available for only a year) by 22%, pensions by 22%.

The health service is being dismantled. Pharmacies have stopped giving prescriptions on credit because the government owes them so much. Many schools lack chairs and books. The railway service and workforce are being severely cut.

GREEK MYTHS

We're told the Greeks have only themselves to blame. But while there has been corruption in government and a failure by the rich to pay their share of tax, the main reason for the crisis is that it is the weakest link in the chain of European countries hit by the banking crisis.

It is not true, as the media would have us believe, that the Greeks are 'lazy'. They work the longest annual hours and take the least unauthorised leave of any workers in Europe. Their age of retirement is at the EU average.

THE IMF

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is often presented as a bunch of benevolent folk who come round and say: "Sorry to see you're having a bit of difficulty. Here's a few bob to tide you over while you sort yourselves out."

In fact the IMF is more like a 'do-it-our-way-or-else' protection racket - and were seen by many Greeks an invading army.

The IMF imposed on Greece two 'memoranda' which require privatisation, the removal of employment rights, and forbade solutions to the crisis like nationalisation and programmes of state investment. Nearly all of the 'bail out' money goes back to foreign banks to pay off debt repayments.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Indulge in some 'solidarity tourism' by going on holiday to Greece and talking with the ordinary people.
- Link your branch with a school, workplace or community in Greece.
- Challenge those who peddle cheap anti-Greek jokes and myths.
- Oppose Cameron's proposals to close UK borders to Greeks: they (and we) have a right to go to other EU countries.
- Discuss how things might be run better if we started, not from the needs of banks, but from meeting people's needs - remembering new needs such as social care for the elderly.
- Oppose, as everyone we met urged us to, the cuts being made by our own government.
- Join the big TUC March – For a Future that Works! – on Saturday 20 October.
- Sign Tony Benn's Appeal and affiliate to the Greece Solidarity Campaign – at www.greecesolidarity.org.

Our Aims

- To develop practical acts in solidarity with Greek working people
- To support and celebrate the determined resistance to all those opposing 'austerity measures' in Greece
- To provide information on the situation in Greece including debunking the myths about the causes of the crisis
- To encourage conferences, meetings, discussions, debates, protests, publications, media work, musical and cultural events
- To encourage mutual contacts with Greece through delegations, training etc
- To oppose governmental attempts to weaken trade unions and destroy collective bargaining
- To work with solidarity organisations of Greeks resident in the UK and to link with similar anti-austerity campaigns across Europe
- To defend Greece's democracy, sovereignty and independence and support the right of the Greek people to determine their own future free from oppressive external interference
- To support and build activity around these objectives throughout Britain, within Parliament and local government, with trade unions, pensioners, students, faith groups, equality campaigns, cultural and political organisations, and social movement bodies

Affiliation & Membership:

People are encouraged to affiliate to the Greece Solidarity Campaign on the basis of Tony Benn's Appeal to Solidarity at www.greecesolidarity.org at the following annual affiliation rates:

Supporter: Free (to receive continued Address, Individual Member (with voting rights): £12 Unwaged £6)

Local Organisation: £24

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 Email: _____
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Please make cheques payable to: **Greece Solidarity Campaign, c/o CUF, Haverhill Square, 1, Cambridge Road, London N1 6JH**

For further info contact: **Andrew Brown 07500 666 558**
Andrew Brown 07500 342 233
 Email: greecesolidarity@gmail.com

www.greecesolidarity.org

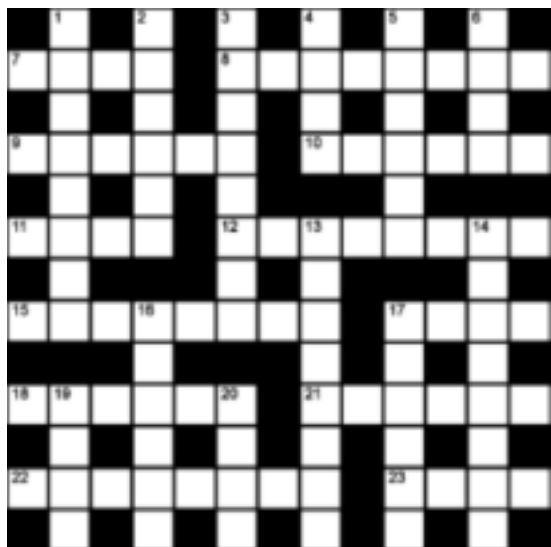
GREECE SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN

Αλληλεγγύη

www.greecesolidarity.org

Copies of the campaign's first leaflet are available to order at www.greecesolidarity.org

Prize Crossword No. 77 set by Zebedee



Solution to Crossword No 76 which appeared in the August 2012 edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to **Paul Crabtree** from **Rossendale, Lancs**

Across: 1 Organisation, 7 Veto, 8 Marginal, 9 Battle, 10 Potter, 11 Roe, 12 Stick, 14 Ledge, 16 Bap, 18 Feline, 20 Replay, 22 Division, 23 Nude, 24 Eavesdropped.
Down: 1 Overact, 2 Ghost, 3 Number, 4 Stripe, 5 Thistle, 6 Orate, 13 Cuisine, 15 Grandad, 16 Behind, 17 Pronto, 19 Erica, 21 Pin-up.

Across

- 7 Tibetan priest (4)
8 Administrator of a will (8)
9 Of greater size (6)
10 Glenn _____, US bandleader 1909-1944 (6)
11 A body of water; red dye (4)
12 A poisonous, evergreen shrub (8)
15 Unwanted remnants (8)
17 Head covering (4)
18 Disreputably; shifty (6)
21 Exploit; abuse (6)

- 22 One hanging about idly (8)
23 Play pranks (4)

Down

- 1 A file containing data on a certain subject (8)
2 Swing loosely (6)
3 A 'break-up' letter (4,4)
4 Suppose; believe (4)
5 Irish capital (6)
6 Lavish foolish love (on) (4)
13 A gullible person (4,4)
14 Messenger (8)
16 Relinquish an office (6)

- 17 Shove; be aggressive salesman (6)
19 Double-reed woodwind instrument (4)
20 Charlotte Brontë's Jane (4)



The winner of this month's crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25

MARKS & SPENCER

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Address.....

.....

.....Postcode.....

Thanks for all your responses to the 76th ASLEF crossword in the August edition. If you complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 77 St John Street, London EC1M 4NN by the 14th of the issue month.

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